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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

TUESDAY, AUGUST 21, 2007

In Today's Papers

Gul Fails to Receive Enough Votes for President; Second Round Set for August 24

All papers report that on Monday, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul won 341 votes in the first round of the presidential election in the parliament, short of the 367 needed to become president. The opposition CHP boycotted yesterday's voting, but the required quorum of 367 was achieved when the MHP decided to take part in the parliament. The leader of the far-right party BBP Muhsin Yazicioglu and an independent MP voted for Gul. MHP candidate Sabahattin Cakmakoglu won 70 votes, and DSP candidate Tayfun Icli 13 votes. A second round of voting has been set for August 24 when 367 votes are required again; but in the third round to be held August 28, Gul is expected to win as only a simple majority (276 votes) will suffice to elect the new president.

Baykal won't Debate 'Legitimacy' of Presidential Election

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Radikal, and Cumhuriyet report CHP leader Deniz Baykal defended his party's boycotting of the voting, saying the CHP did not want to take responsibility for the process of making Turkey a "moderate Islamic country." "The danger is clear, we are creating a monster in the laboratory," Baykal said. Baykal, however, also noted that since the election was held under constitutional rules, the CHP would not question its legitimacy if Gul is elected president. "CHP has made no attempts outside democracy, such as expecting an intervention from the military. Our secular republic of 80 years has begun to go backward in the last 15 years, and this change will speed up after the election of a president," Baykal said.

Leftist ODP leader Ufuk Uras said the CHP decision to boycott the presidential elections was "childish and undemocratic." Kurdish DTP deputies left their ballots blank, declining to vote for Gul, saying they did not receive clear messages from him with regard to the Kurdish issue.

Editorial Commentary on Gul as President

Gungor Mengi writes in the mainstream daily Vatan: "Presidential candidate Gul is making some interesting remarks during his meetings to garner support. He promises to represent everybody. Something is wrong with this approach. The President of Turkey cannot be impartial between those who are loyal to the secular republic and those who work for an Islamist fundamentalist system. Given his background related to the use of the headscarf as a political symbol, it will be very interesting to see to what extent he can be neutral on this matter. He will undoubtedly go through a challenging period in the presidential seat because of mounting prejudices against him based on his past record. In any case, we should give him credit and a helping hand to prevent him from falling into the hands of extremists."

Oktay Eksi writes in the mainstream daily Hurriyet: "Electing a president is now only a formality. Once the process is concluded Gul will be the new president. He should consider himself the leader of 70 million people, just like a conductor of a giant orchestra. His success depends on his skill at comprehending the laws and regulations well and using the state instruments fairly. If he favors one or two parts of society rather than the entire people, he will be held accountable by history. Gul is moving toward a challenging period. During his term, whether the modern Turkish Republic will be at stake or not is the main question. There might be signs of compromise in the nature of his political past, but we just don't remember any record of his good governance when critical times emerged. Time will reveal the truth."

Turkey-Iran Electricity Deal

All papers report Energy Minister Hilmi Guler told the press Monday on his return from Tehran that Turkey has signed a deal with Iran to import an annual 3-6 billion kilowatt hours of electricity from the

ANKARA 00002167 002 OF 003

Islamic Republic. "Technical teams from both countries are still meeting regarding the construction of these lines to be completed within one year," Guler said, adding that the deal also included plans for Turkey's private sector to construct a 10,000 megawatt hydroelectric power plant. Officials said three power plants will be built in both countries which would have a total capacity of 6,000 mw. They noted that in July, Turkey and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding for USD 3.5 billion worth of Turkish investment in Iran's South Pars gas field. The deal will turn Iran into a transport country for Turkmen gas to flow to Turkey. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet says the deal signed with Iran, "a new Blue Stream agreement," would not allow Turkey to sell natural gas to third countries.

Bryza Rejects Ambassadorial Assignment in Greek Cyprus

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet and Posta: Papers report that State Department Deputy Assistant Secretary Matthew Bryza will be getting married to Hudson Institute's Zeyno Baran this Thursday in Istanbul.

Reportedly, the State Department offered DAS Bryza the Ambassadorial position in Nicosia. However, Bryza rejected the assignment with a concern that Greek-Cypriots could react negatively to his being married to a Turk. Tabloid Posta headlines "He Prefers Love." Mainstream Milliyet reports that on their wedding invitation, the Bryza-Baran couple stressed that presents should not be sent to the wedding; instead, money should be donated to Milliyet's "Dad, Send me to School" campaign for the education of disadvantaged children, mainly girls, in Turkey.

Democratic Presidential Candidates in the US Debate Turkey's Role in Iraq

Star, Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah: Papers report that during a presidential debate in Iowa on Sunday, leading Democratic presidential candidates did not agree on how Turkey would react in case of an early US troop withdrawal from Iraq. New York Senator Hilary Clinton said that "Turkey would not allow US troops to go through their territory in case of a pull out, as they did not allow the troops to enter Iraq through Turkey." New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson disagreed with Clinton and proposed an all-Muslim force in Iraq, including Turks, and an early withdrawal. Senate's Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Joseph Biden resisted Richardson's call for an early withdrawal and said "If we leave Iraq in chaos, there

will be a regional war. It will bring, Saudis, Iranians and Turks into Iraq." Biden reiterated his earlier proposal to divide Iraq into three autonomous zones for Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds. Illinois Senator Barack Obama said that he generally agreed with Biden's proposal but this should be done by the Iraqis rather than as something imposed by the US.

TV Highlights
NTV, 7.00 A.M.

Domestic News

- President Sezer has toured key state institutions to bid farewell before handing over his post to the new president.
- Alevi writer and AKP MP Reha Camuroglu and pro-Kurdish DTP leader Ahmet Turk called for the sacking of Yusuf Halacoglu, chairman of Turkish History Institution, for saying Kurds in Turkey were of Turkmen and Alevis of Armenian origin.
- The third round of collective bargaining talks between the government and public servants' labor unions is to be held Wednesday.
- The Capital Markets Board said Turkey survived the recent global economic turmoil with minimal losses.

International News

ANKARA 00002167 003 OF 003

- French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner has arrived in Baghdad for a three day visit at the invitation of President Talabani.
- The radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr said the British army has been defeated in Iraq and is left with no option but to retreat from the country.
- The Guardian said the PKK-affiliated PJAK was "the fastest growing armed resistance group in Iran."
- Climate change campaigners clashed Monday with riot police at Heathrow during a demonstration to protest against plans for a third runway at one of Europe's busiest airports.

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